



**SOUTH MOLTON
RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL**

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

AND THE

SANITARY INSPECTOR

FOR THE

Year Ending December 31st, 1938.

W. GRADDON MORTIMER,

Medical Officer of Health.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH FOR THE SOUTH MOLTON RURAL DISTRICT.

STATISTICS.

Area (Acres).....	114,752
Population, 1938.....	9,024
Number of inhabited Houses	2,593
Rateable Value	£28,494
Sum represented by a Penny Rate.....	£122 15s. 3d.

VITAL STATISTICS.

Live Births—Legitimate, total 110, 55 Males, 55 Females.
Illegitimate, total 4, 2 Males, 2 Females. Birth rate per
1,000—12.527.

Still Births—Legitimate, 4. Illegitimate, nil. Rate per 1,000
Total Births, 29.5.

Deaths, 129. Death Rate per 1,000, 14.29.

Births for England and Wales—Rates per 1,000 population—
Live 15.1. Still, .60.

Deaths all causes—Per 1,000 population England and Wales, 11.6

Deaths—Males, 71; Females, 58; Total, 129.

Death Rate per 1,000 estimated Resident Population, 14.29.

Deaths from Puerperal Cause:—Puerperal Sepsis, 0; Other
Puerperal Causes, 0; Total, 0.

Death Rate of Infants under 1 year of age. Total deaths, males
3; females, 3. Legitimate, 3 males; 3 females.

Deaths from Measles at all ages—None.

Deaths from Whooping Cough at all ages—None.

Deaths from Diarrhoea under 2 years—None.

Deaths from Cancer at all ages—15.

GENERAL PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES TO THE AREA.

Hospitals.

Tuberculosis—

Hawley Sanatorium in the Borough of Barnstaple has 28 beds.

Hawkmoor—a County Council Sanatorium takes a good number of cases of Tuberculosis of Lungs, etc.

Sydney House, Torrington, has accommodation for 48 children. A large House in Torrington Borough—used for reception of delicate children.

Maternity Care—

The Devon County Council have approved of South Molton Cottage Hospital and North Devon Infirmary for the admission of women in the area requiring institutional treatment for Maternity Care under the following conditions:—

- a* Those found to have some abnormal condition.
- b* Those having unsuitable accommodation for confinement in their own homes.
- c* North Devon Infirmary for those suffering from Puerperal Fever or Pyrexia.

Consultant Services and Maternity outfits are provided in necessitous cases.

General.—

The Barnstaple and North Devon Infirmary serves North Devon exceptionally well in providing medical and surgical treatment. The South Molton and District Cottage Hospital also takes a number of the less severe surgical cases.

Clinics and Treatment Centres—

The Tuberculosis and Venereal Clinics have been established at North Devon Infirmary.

Crippled Childrens' Clinic—At Boutport Street, Barnstaple. much appreciated in the district.

PUBLIC HEALTH AFFAIRS.

One Full-time Medical Officer.

One ,, ,, Sanitary Officer.

One ,, ,, Assistant Sanitary Officer.

One Vaccination Officer and the Health Doctor.

Laboratory Facilities—

The Public Health Service of the Devon County Council at the Dix's Field, Exeter, in charge of Dr. T. Lawson McEwan, B.Sc.(Honours), F.I.C., M.B.Cd.B.Honours.

This laboratory is completely installed with the necessary equipment for Bacteriological investigation of all kinds. This service is extremely valuable and has been widely used throughout our district by medical practitioners. The laboratory also undertakes the analysis of drinking water and milk and the examination of Tubercle in milk, butter and cream.

This laboratory is well equipped for the Bacteriological examination of drinking water.

Midwives—The District Nurses.

Nursing in the Home—The District Nurses.

There have been fewer of these recently—and several of our parishes are still without a nurses' service.

ISOLATION OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE.

We are now to be linked up with Tiverton—who are willing to take our infectious cases. They are asking us to provide an additional 8 or 5 beds at a cost of £6,000 to be paid by the South Molton Borough and Rural District—this would give 33 beds for the combined districts. At the Rate of 1 bed per 1,000 inhabitants this does not seem too many. Isolation of Scarlet Fever cases can often be quite well done at home—many of the cases that have to go to Hospital are from farms, or shops that deal in milk, butter and food. I cannot recall a single case which has been isolated at home that has given me the least regret, that it did not go away, and I am inclined more and more to the view that Isolation of Scarlet Fever can in many cases be quite well done at home. It is only the risk of what might happen that makes one isolate these cases at a fever hospital.

During 1938 six cases of infection disease were admitted to the Isolation Hospital at Tiverton from the Rural District Council.

PREVALANCE OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE.

12 Cases were notified from the following Parishes:—

Scarlet Fever 9—Chulmleigh, 2 cases; Witheridge, 1 case; Twitchen, 1 case; North Molton, 4 cases; Ashmill, 1 case.

Diphtheria—1, Bishopsnympton.

Erysipelas—1, Witheridge.

Typhoid—1, West Buckland.

Scarlet Fever still remains the chief notifiable infectious disease—cases usually very mild, and sequelar—not serious.

Disinfection of infected Bedding and Clothing. We are asked to disinfect Bedding and Clothing occasionally. We are unable to carry this out as we have no steam disinfectors.

Books for Public and circulating libraries may not be used by persons suffering from infectious disease. If such a book has been exposed to infection it must not be returned to the library until *it has been disinfected by the Sanitary Officer*, who may destroy the book if they think fit repayment to the library of its value. They should be disinfected by being hung on wires in a zinc lined chamber and exposed to 5% Formaldehyde.

This is rather a controversial subject—and there is no certain evidence that Scarlet Fever is spread in this way.

WATER.

During the year it was thought advisable that piped supplies of water (North Molton, Chulmleigh, Bishopsnympton, Witheridge, Rackenford and Kingsnympton) should be analysed *twice yearly*. In Rural districts where a piped supply is at present economically unobtainable and where reliance has to be largely placed on private supplies and wells, this is not done.

A single laboratory examination of a water, however favourable the result, does *not justify the conclusion that all is well* and the supply suitable for drinking purposes. In such instance everything possible should be done to prevent the access of pollution to the water. By relatively simple measures, such as the removal of obvious sources of contamination from the catchment area—and by attention to the coping brick lining and covering of the well it should usually be possible to reduce the coliform count to a fairly satisfactory level.

The importance of adequate topographical examinations must be insisted on. No matter how satisfactory the bacteriological analysis may be, water cannot be considered as safe which is exposed to known sources of contamination. In Rural areas where frequent bacteriological examinations are impracticable, reliance must be placed almost exclusively on topographical examination.

During the last 15 years, more and more reliance is placed on the Bacteriological examination of water, than on the chemical examination. When once the chemical analysis of water has been done, there does not seem to be the necessity for doing it frequently as generally the quantities of the salts of say iron, magnesium, manganese, calcium, sodium potassum—in it remain fairly constant. In fact in water supplies the history and nature of which are known, routine control of purity is often maintained by bacteriological examination. The *Bacillus*

Coli has its home in human, animal and bird intestines—and it is the presence of these bacilli in water can be regarded as undoubted evidence of recent excretal pollution of human or animal origin, very careful estimation of the number of these bacilli has to be made before deciding whether the pollution has been severe enough to render the water potentially dangerous, i.e. the whole essence of the Test is quantitative.

The piped supplies of water, for Witheridge is very unfavourable. In spite of considerable expenditure by the Council the quantity is insufficient. The recent borehole, 150 feet deep started off well—at 800 gallons an hour—the last test was 1,000 gallons in eight hours—120 gallons an hour. Messrs. Rofe and Rafferty after surveying the district have definitely come to the conclusion that the water must come from a river at the foot of the hill on which the village is built—this means sedimentation, with coagulants filtration, chlorination and pumping. The scheme is now in hand and it is difficult to see what else could be done.

The position at Bishopsnympton is somewhat similar but not so bad. Here another borehole has been sunk, and a satisfactory supply as far as quantity goes—but the supply deposits iron on standing and also contains manganese. This again necessitates treatment, before it can be used for domestic purposes. I have often tried to find some authoritative pronouncement on water diviners. Some people think it heresy to question diviners, others are sceptical of their powers. It seems certain that boring often gives good results at first, which do not seem to last—and it is this more than anything else that makes one doubt their use. Our other piped supplies at North Molton, Rackenford, Chulmleigh, and Kingsnympton are satisfactory.

We need piped supplies to Chittlehampton, West Buckland, Molland and Georgenympton as soon as the Council can take them in hand.

TUBERCULOSIS.

Number of cases on register, December 31st, 1938:—

a Pulmonary—Males, 16; Females, 11.

b Non-Pulmonary—Males, 3; Females, 5. Total, 35.

Total cases on register: December, 31st, 1937, 37.

December 31st, 1936, 39.

New Cases—During the year six new cases were reported in accordance with the Regulations Pulmonary—Males, 2; Females, 3. Non-Pulmonary—Males, none; Females, 1.

Age Periods—Non-Pulmonary, 10-15 years, 1 Female; Pulmonary, 1 Male, 38 years; 3 Females, 26, 35 and 65 years.

Mortality—One Female, 26 years; Two Males, 19 and 24 years.

CAUSES OF DEATH DURING THE YEAR, 1938.

	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
Typhoid and Paratyphoid	0	0
Measles	0	0
Scarlet Fever	0	0
Whooping Cough	0	0
Diphtheria	0	0
Influenza	0	1
Encephalitis Lethargica	0	0
Cerebro-Spinal Fever	0	0
Tuberculosis of Respiratory System	1	2
Other Tuberculosis	0	0
Syphilis	0	0
General Paralysis of Insane, Taber Orsatis	0	0
Cancer	11	4
Diabites	3	0
Cerebral Haemorrhage	3	8
Heart Disease	17	15
Aneurysm	0	0
Other Circulatory Disease	5	4
Bronchitis	3	4
Pneumonia	1	3
Other Respiratory Disease	0	1
Peptic Ulcer.....	0	0
Diarrhoea, under two years	0	0
Appendicitis	2	1
Cirrhosis of Lungs	0	0
Other Liver Disease	0	0
Other Digestive Diseases	1	0
Acute and Chronic Nephritis.....	2	3
Puerperal Sepsis	0	0
Other Puerperal Diseases	0	0
Congenital Debility, Premature Birth, &c.	3	1
Senility	3	4
Suicide	3	1
Other Violence	3	2
Other Defined Diseases	10	4
Ill defined or not known	0	0
Diarrhoea, two years and over	0	0
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	Totals 71	58
Total Deaths	129

HOUSING.

The Housing Survey is still incomplete. We are making good as we go—and only a small portion of our area now requires survey—I mean by this, the houses are being built to replace clearance areas.

The Housing (Rural Workers) Act has now been in operation 11 years and will be extended another three years. In Devon 1,850 houses have been reconditioned up to the end of 1937. County Councils are required by the Housing Act of 1930 to contribute at least £1 per house for a period of 40 years towards the cost of new houses erected by the Rural District Councils for members of the Agricultural population. It is anticipated that under the new Housing Bill the County Council will be called upon to make greater contributions towards costs of providing new houses for agricultural workers in order that they may be let at very low rents.

Conditions of Grant.

- a* The dwelling must be occupied by a person (whether as owner or tenant) whose income is such that he would not ordinarily pay a rent in excess of that paid by agricultural workers in the district.
- b* The rent must not be more than the ordinary agricultural rent, or the average rent paid during the previous five years plus 4 per cent. on that part of cost of works not covered by the Grant.


Districts from which approved applications were received:—

Rural—Barnstaple, 284. Tiverton and Bampton, and Culmstock, 206. Torrington, 175. Okehampton, 166. South Molton, 95. Crediton, 98. St. Thomas, 92. Honiton, 91. Newton Abbot, 108. Holsworthy, 75. Bideford, 63. Axminster, 70. Tavistock, 49. Totnes, 56. Kingsbridge, 32. Plympton, 22. Broadwoodwidge, 11.

I wish to express my appreciation of the help Mr. Willey is always ready to give me, also to Mr. Oxland for his willing help.

W. G. MORTIMER,

F.R.C.S. Eng., M.B., B.S.Lond.



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ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SANITARY INSPECTOR AND
SURVEYOR FOR THE SOUTH MOLTON RURAL AREA,
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST. DECEMBER, 1938.

WATER.

During the year, a borehole has been sunk at Bishops-nympton, to augment the existing supply during dry periods of the year, when it is insufficient to meet the demands. The borehole was sunk to a depth of 200 feet, and on test, gave an average yield of approximately 713 gallons per hour, the test extending over a period of 14 days and nights. Whilst the water is bacteriologically pure, unfortunately it contains manganese and dissolved iron to such an extent as to render the water unsightly, and it is necessary that it be treated for the removal of these minerals, before being brought into use. An engineer has been consulted, and a scheme for the treatment of the water is being prepared.

The supply at Witheridge has for some time past, been insufficient to meet the demands during the dry months of the year. Several efforts have been made from time to time to obtain an adequate supply for this village, considerable prospecting has been carried out during the year, and gaugings of various springs have been made, but there appears to be no means of obtaining an adequate supply unless the river is tapped.

An engineer has been retained for the purpose of reporting on the available supplies, and his report is awaited.

A borehole is being sunk at Burrington for the purpose of obtaining a supply of water for this village.

Proper piped schemes now exist at North Molton, Bishops-nympton, Witheridge, Chulmleigh, Rackenford and Kings-nympton, and a small supply is available to most of the inhabitants of Brayford. This scheme cannot be regarded as complete, however, as the head is insufficient to supply all the houses in the village.

The remainder of the District is supplied by means of a few small piped supplies, and by wells, both publicly and privately owned.

As before mentioned, a borehole has been sunk for the purpose of affording a supply of water to the village of Burrington, and in addition to this village, proper schemes are desirable in the following villages:—Chittlehampton, Molland, Alswere, Georgenympton and West Buckland. All these schemes are included in the Council's five year programme, and it is hoped, will be carried out during that period.

An engine has been installed in connection with the Rackenford water supply to assist the windmill in maintaining a sufficient supply of water for the inhabitants of this village, during calm periods.

Short extensions of the water mains have been made at Witheridge and Kingsnympton, for the purpose of supplying new Council Housing Estates, at Bishopsnympton as the result of private building operations, and about $\frac{1}{4}$ -mile of main has been re-laid at Chulmleigh owing to the extensively corroded condition of the existing pipes.

Samples of water have been taken from all the piped supplies in the District during the year, and in each case, the water was chemically and bacteriologically satisfactory in all respects for drinking and domestic use.

Particulars of work done in connection with water supplies during the year are as follows:—

No. of inspections carried out in connection with private supplies	72
No. of samples taken from existing supplies	22
No. of water supplies to existing houses improved	9
No. of supplies taken into existing houses from public mains	3
No. of visits to and inspections of public water supplies	49

DRAINAGE AND SEWERAGE.

During the year, a scheme of sewerage and sewage disposal was completed for the hamlet of Yeo Mill, West Anstey. The scheme consists of sewerage the hamlet, and conveying the sewage to treatment works, which consist of a single settling tank, with sludge lagoon, and a system of irrigation channels, into which the effluent from the tank flows.

No other sewerage works, apart from works arising in the course of maintenance of existing systems, have been executed.

Proper sewerage and modern sewage treatment works are in operation at North Molton, Bishopsnympton, Witheridge, West Buckland, Rackenford and Chittlehamholt.

New or improved sewerage schemes with modern sewage disposal are required at Chulmeigh, Kingsnympton, Chittlehampton, Burrington, Molland, Mariansleigh, and Georgenympton.

Details of drainage work carried out during the year are as follows:—

No. of new drains laid to existing houses	33
No. of extensions to drains	10
No. of existing drains repaired	1
No. of drains cleared	5

Closet Accommodation.

No. of new closets constructed	33
No. of earth closets and privies converted to water closets	18
No. of new closet pans fixed	41
No. of new flushing cisterns provided	23

PUBLIC CLEANSING.

During the year, a scheme for collecting the refuse from Georgenympton village has been introduced, which brings the number of villages from which refuse is now collected to seven, viz:—West Buckland, Chittlehampton, North Molton, Chulmeigh, Witheridge, Bishopsnympton and Georgenympton.

The refuse is collected by Contract, and is deposited in local tips.

18 inspections of refuse tips have been made.

NUISANCES.

Five complaints as to nuisances were received during the year. Four were found to be justified, and informal notices for the abatement of the nuisances were served. In three cases the notices were effective, the nuisances being abated, and in the remaining case a statutory notice was served, and the notice is still outstanding. No prosecutions were instituted.

SCHOOLS.

There are 29 public elementary schools in the District. Several visits have been paid, and in five cases works have been executed to remedy defects found.

Disinfection.

13 premises were disinfected during the year, following infectious diseases. No steam disinfectors are available for disinfecting bedding, etc., which has of necessity to be dealt with in the rooms disinfected.

INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD.

Milk.

In accordance with arrangements made by the County Council, 135 samples of milk were sent to the County Laboratory for bacteriological examination during the year. All these samples were taken at the farms at the times of production.

The majority of these samples were taken from Accredited producers, and the Accredited standard is also taken as indicating a pass or a fail in the case of non-designated milks. Of the 135 samples taken, 107 passed, giving a percentage of passes of 79.26 as compared with last year's percentage of 63.36, and that of the year before of 82. In all cases where samples are returned as having failed, the farms are visited and an endeavour made to ascertain the cause of the failure. Much good work is accomplished by such visits, and generally a repeat sample will pass after such visit.

A repeat sample, in addition to being subject to the Methylene Blue Test, is tested for bacterial count, and *Bacillus Coli* content, and the sample must pass all three tests before being considered satisfactory.

The cowsheds continue to improve and producers of milk are becoming more and more interested in clean milk production.

Slaughterhouses and Meat.

There are eleven slaughterhouses in the District, eight registered and three licenced. The registered slaughterhouses are badly situated in relation to present day thought and requirements. One bovine carcase was condemned for generalised tuberculosis, six pigs heads for localised tuberculosis, and one bovine carcase for other conditions.

It is impossible for this branch of the work to receive anything like the attention it demands, and efficiency in this direction could only be attained by the appointment of an Inspector to devote the whole of his time to this work.

Bakehouses.

There are twelve bakehouses in the area, which are kept in a sanitary condition and there has been no complaint concerning them.

HOUSING.

During the year, twenty houses were completed by the Council for re-housing purposes, and 10 houses are at present in course of erection, 8 at Burrington and 2 at Romansleigh, for re-housing persons to be displaced from individual unfit dwellings. The Council's immediate housing programme is as follows:—

25 houses at Chulmleigh, 8 at Rose Ash, 6 at Georgenympton and 2 at Heasley Mill.

No clearance orders were made during the year, attention in the housing direction having been devoted mainly to clearing up the position to date, and preparing re-housing plans.

Five houses have been reconditioned under the Housing (Rural Workers) Act during the year, making a total of 91 reconditioned in the area since the introduction of the 1926 Act.

Fourteen notices under Section 11 of the Housing Act have been served, four demolition orders have been made, and in ten cases undertakings have been given to render the houses fit for human habitation, or to use the premises for purposes other than for human habitation.

HOUSING STATISTICS.

1.—Inspection of Dwelling Houses During the Year.

(1)	(a)	Total number of dwelling houses inspected during the year for housing defects	258
	(b)	No. of inspections made for the purpose	440
(2)	(a)	Number of dwelling houses (included under sub-head (1) above) which were inspected and recorded under the Housing Consolidated Regulations, 1925	191
	(b)	No. of inspections made for the purpose	339
(3)		Number of dwelling houses found to be in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation	14
(4)		Number of dwelling houses (exclusive of those referred to under the preceding sub-head) found not in all respects to be reasonably fit for human habitation	245

II.—Remedy of Defects During the Year Without the Service of Formal Notices

Number of defective dwellings rendered fit by consequence of informal action by the Local Authority or their Officers	79
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III.—Action Under Statutory Powers During the Year.

A. Proceedings under Sections 17, 18 and 23 of the Housing Act, 1930—

(1) Number of dwelling houses in respect of which notices were served requiring repairs	0
(2) Number of dwelling houses which were rendered fit after the service of formal notices.	
(a) By owners	0
(b) By Local Authority in default of owners	0

B. Proceedings under the Public Health Acts.

(1) Number of dwelling houses in respect of which notices were served requiring defects to be remedied.....	9
(2) No. of dwelling houses in which defects were remedied after the service of formal notices.	
(a) By Owners	1
(b) By Local Authority in default of owners	0

C. Proceedings under Sections 11 and 13 of the Housing Act 1936.

(1) No. of houses in respect of which Demolition Orders were made	4
(2) No. of dwelling houses demolished in pursuance of Demolition Orders	2

D. Proceedings under Section 12 of the Housing Act, 1936.

(1) No. of separate tenements or underground rooms in respect of which Closing Orders were made	0
(2) No. of separate tenements or underground rooms in respect of which Closing Orders were determined the tenement or room having been rendered fit.....	0

